

# *The American Record Guide*

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as Don Giovanni*

## BRUNO WALTER PLAYS MOZART



**MOZART:** *Symphony in G minor, K. 183*; *Symphony in C, K. 200*. Columbia ML-5002, \$4.98. *Symphony in C, K. 425 (Linz)* (1 side) and rehearsals of same (3 sides). Columbia SL-224, \$10.00. **In the Gardens of the Mirabell:** *Eine kleine Nachtmusik, K. 525*; *Minuets in F, K. 599* and in *C, K. 568*; *Three German Dances, K. 605*; *Masonic Funeral Music, K. 477*; *Overtures to The Magic Flute, K. 620*, *The Marriage of Figaro, K. 492*, *Così fan tutte, K. 588*, and *The Impresario, K. 486*. Columbia ML-5004, \$4.98. Bruno Walter conducting the Columbia Symphony Orchestra.

**MOZART:** *Symphony in D, K. 385 (Haffner)*; *Symphony in C, K. 425 (Linz)*; Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Columbia ML-5001, \$4.98.

**MOZART:** *Symphony in C, K. 425 (Linz)*; **SCHUBERT:** *Symphony No. 5 in B flat*; Hans von Benda conducting the Berlin Chamber Orchestra. Telfunkun LGX 66020, \$4.98

▲THE EUROPEANS say that Bruno Walter is one of the interpreters of Mozart's music. In his autobiography, *Theme and Variations*, Walter tells us that "After the splendor of Mozart had been revealed to me by Mahler, my understanding of the master grew even more profound. . . A certain reserve and modesty seemed indicated by Mozart's dramatic-musical style. While I should never have been able to prove my contention, I was so certain of the correctness of my intuitive perception that I decided to speak to Mahler about it. After some hesitation, he admitted that I was right. . . I had begun to realize Mozart's strength and greatness behind his moderate forms, expressions, and means, and I sensed with due reverence and modesty that I had gained access to his soul."

Reading Walter's book, one realizes his veneration for Mozart, the depth of his feeling and sentiment. There has always been a warmheartedness and cordiality (*Gemuetlichkeit*, as the Viennese say), and a nobility and graciousness in his performances of this composer. A romantic aura hovers over his interpretations, suggested by his tendency to linger over phrases, quite alien some authorities claim to 18th-century music, where continuity should be always sustained. In these days, Walter's Mozart is something special and very lovely indeed, even though we may prefer a different approach in some works.

Mozart's *Symphony No. 36*, written at Linz in 1783 and dedicated to Count Thun, is a less audacious opus than his *Symphony No. 35*, written a year earlier

for the Haffner family, but it is an equally cherishable score with its brilliancy, festive splendor, and lovely *cantabile* passages. The latter grace the pages of the first and last movements as well as the singing voices of the *Andante*. Of the three conductors in these recordings, Walter makes more of the *cantabile* sections, though others have stressed the festive qualities more than he. But Walter's performance is in every way a finer and more persuasive evaluation of the symphony than Sir Thomas Beecham's or Hans von Benda's. The latter's, for all his sound musicianship, is a pedestrian rendition. Sir Thomas seems to have had an off-day in his performance; the playing is often rough and neither in the "Linz" nor the "Haffner" are his tempi as convincingly set forth as in his pre-war performances. The Walter version is something special with the three-sided rehearsals in which we are given a rare insight into his benevolence of spirit and his musical approach to a great symphony. After hearing the rehearsals, one sits back and enjoys his finished performance the more, and his often penetrating sentiment for the time being is more persuasive.

An example of Walter's way with Mozart is set forth in his long admired treatment of the serenade, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, in the program called "In the Gardens of Mirabell", after the famous garden at Salzburg which has been "the scene of many concerts of Mozart's lighter works, both in season and out,"—an enchanting spot where Walter has undoubtedly conducted many concerts. Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* was originally written as a string serenade but later scored for string orchestra. Though marked a serenade, it partakes of the true characteristics of a classical symphony, and can be treated as a serenade or as a symphony with equal success. Walter's approach has always been to the more warmhearted character of a serenade, whereas the late Felix Weingartner and many others treat it as a symphony. Walter's pre-war version, made with the Vienna Symphony, has always been a favorite performance, and it is good to have his gracious rendition of it again in a modern recording.

Walter's performances of the early *G minor* and *C major Symphonies* are affectionately played, but one questions the validity of his approach to both since these works gain in strength by a tighter and more vital control. This is particularly true of the first and last movements of the *G minor*. The heroic grace of the *C major*, of which Saint-Foix speaks, is not affirmed in Walter's rendition. Moreover, his treatment of the slow movements of both works stresses sentiment which in the case of the *G minor* accentuates its banality. The "Mirabell Gardens" program is wholly praiseworthy—for here is music that allows for interpretative variation, though the *Figaro* overture

could have been crisper, but the rest—especially the *Masonic Funeral Music*—beautifully played.

It remains to speak of Benda's performance of the Schubert *Fifth* which is hardly much better than his performance of the "Linz". His tempi alterations in the slow movement may make for contrast but I prefer adherence to the composer's directions.

The recording characteristics, I have reserved for the last. Benda gets the clearest and all around best sound. Walter fares better than Beecham, especially in the balance of woodwinds and strings, but there is too much reverberation on the low end in both the Walter and Beecham recordings. This tends to make for muddy currents where clear water should flow in Mozart's symphonies. Mozart's water run deep but they are never clouded no matter the depth. To be sure, the sound in the Walter recordings is characteristic of that more often heard in modern concert halls in our time as well as modern recordings, but in the pursuit of authentic realism someone should realize that economizing on bass reverberation makes for more lucid and agreeable Mozart. The 18th-century orchestra was never intended to sound like the 19th or 20th.

—P.H.R.

## The Sleeping Beauty Unabridged



**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Sleeping Beauty, Op. 66* (Complete); Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Antal Dorati. Mercury LP set (3 discs) OL-3-103, \$22.50. **THE SAME** (in the Sadler's Wells Ballet version); Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden conducted by Robert Irving. RCA Victor LP set (2 discs) LM-6034, \$7.96

▲AS I write these lines the Sadler's Wells Ballet has just left New York to continue its American tour. It has left behind (as it has after each of its visits) the memory of its wonderfully evocative production of the great Tchaikovsky-Petipa *Sleeping Beauty*. It seems clear that no other company in the Western world could perform this work with such care, style, and accuracy. For those who have seen or will see this production, there will be a temptation to rush out and purchase the new RCA Victor set—perhaps for the music itself, perhaps for use as a memory crutch for the mind's eye. Those who do, for either reason, will not be disappointed. Irving (heaven knows how many times he has conducted the work) certainly knows the score and presents it well enough. He brings to it little imagination in the manner of his enlightened predecessor Constant Lambert, but he does it no violence and handles it rather with satis-

factory professional skill and personal respect. The Royal Opera House Orchestra is, as you would expect, no ball of fire, but the ensemble is agreeably smooth with at least two fine first-desk woodwind players. The recording is spacious, comfortable in sound, but not exceptionally well detailed at the highest and lowest ends of the sonic spectrum. The music one hears is about two-thirds of the complete score; it is all we are accustomed to hearing.

Mercury's set provides an opportunity to hear the complete *Sleeping Beauty* score, and that is cause for rejoicing. Though the ballet was first performed in 1890 at St. Petersburg, it was not until 1952 that the first complete printed orchestral score based on the original manuscripts was published (by the Russian State Music Publishing House). Now it is possible to assay the full measure of Tchaikovsky's vision. One's reaction on hearing the complete score is to say that the unfamiliar portion (particularly in the Vision Scene, Act 2, Scene 1) is equal to what one is acquainted with. It all adds up to an art work of surpassing beauty—chock full of lyric riches, multitudinous touches of orchestral color precisely indicated by dramatic situation. As for rhythm and for appropriateness to the dance, one is struck speechless as number after number seems to be the incarnation of dancing itself. For your reviewer, the complete *Sleeping Beauty* is Tchaikovsky's masterwork and perhaps the single most impressive composition ever created for the dance theatre.

Under the circumstances, one would be willing to take a less effective statement of the music than Dorati and the Minneapolis Orchestra provide. As it turns out, the performance is splendid, excelling in those sections that call for vigor and brilliance. Here and there one could ask from Dorati a bit more control, a bit more poise in blending and balancing tonal colors and weights. But, all in all, this performance is nevertheless the best on LP (when compared with the somewhat complete Irving and the Fistoulari-led editions). And it is certainly the outstanding recording. I have no hesitation in stating that this is the best sound Mercury has ever got out of the recalcitrant Northrup Memorial Auditorium. It is a real hi-fi, make no mistake about that. And very important, the strong tone does not have the degree of edginess that some other Mercury-Minneapolis recordings have had. The overall balance seems improved, too. Even the fortissimos have enough breathing room.

It is seldom one can speak with admiration of program notes, so let's pay homage to Cyril Beaumont, who has contributed the finest writing on *Sleeping Beauty* one can remember. No other with merely words can make a dance

sequence seem visible as can Beaumont. Also included in this deluxe package are handsome drawings by Oliver Messel.

—C.J.L.

## OPERA SPOTLIGHT



**BIZET:** *The Pearl Fishers* (Opera in 3 Acts) (Sung in French); Martha Angelici (Leila), Henri Legay (Nadir), Michel Dens (Zurga), Louis Noguera (Nourabad), Orchestra and Chorus of the Opéra-Comique, conducted by André Cluytens. Angel 3524-B, 2 discs, \$10.96 with libretto, or \$7.96.

▲IF ANYONE, half a dozen years ago, had suggested that there would be three complete recordings of this opera in the catalogs, he would have been probably thought a harmless nut. Nevertheless, here is the third version of this tuneful opera, this time by the forces of the Opéra-Comique, released by Angel.

The present recording is an attractive one, though it does not efface memories of the sonorous Epic set or the singing of Mattiwilda Dobbs and Jean Borthayre in the earlier Renaissance (the most beguiling of the three). Cluytens gives a careful, musically nuanced performance, but with all this preoccupation with detail and dynamics, he somehow fails to blow the breath of life into these pages.

The set is tonally pleasing, and the singing of the principals traditionally sound. Martha Angelici, the Corsican soprano, has a charming lyric voice, but she seems unable to build a real climax and she has a tendency to "throw away" some of her high notes. Henri Legay possesses a thin, reedy tenor, incapable of tonal expansion. He has breath control and a pretty tone, which he demonstrates in the Romance, *Je crois entendre encore*. Both soprano and tenor are definitely small-scale. Better, where volume is considered, is baritone Michel Dens, currently very active on Parisian opera stages. Dens has a good, though not remarkable voice and sings artistically. When it comes to bite and sonority he must bow to Renaissance's Borthayre. The chorus is not always on pitch. The final impression is pretty, but definitely on the tame side. French opera doesn't have to be tame.

—M.deS.

**BRITTEN:** *The Turn of the Screw* (Opera in 2 Acts); Peter Pears (Prologue and Quint), Jennifer Vyvyan (The Governess), David Hemmings (Miles), Olive Dyer (Flora), Joan Cross (The Housekeeper), Arda Mandikian (Miss Jessel), The English Opera Group conducted by Benjamin Britten. London set XLL-1207/08, \$7.96.

▲ENGLISH critics have hailed this latest stage work of Britten as a great English opera. Aware that Britten has cornered a certain coterie of British critics, I must confess that I was prepared to distrust this blanketed viewpoint, since American critics who have heard the opera have dismissed it as a technical vehicle that misses the opportunities inherent in Henry James' story, upon which the opera is based. It may seem illogical to some, as it did to me before I heard the opera, that Britten's technical device of introducing a theme at the beginning, after the short prelude, and then devising a series of variations on it through 15 of the sixteen scenes, was not a suitable way in which an opera score could be developed. This despite the fact that I have long been of the opinion that next to Hindemith, Britten is one of the greatest musical technicians of our time. This is a devilishly clever score, not without melodic beauty or dramatic effect. Britten, like Delius, proves that the variation form can be used for telling effects. James' story of the young governess who goes to care for two seemingly innocent children and discovers that they have been corrupted, and are haunted, by a former governess and valet, now dead, is a tale that could invite a more objectively dramatic approach than Britten has pursued. He creates a dreamlike melismata that cloaks this weird, but strangely moving story in a trance-like manner, with a highly effective orchestra of small size—18 instruments. From this ensemble he weaves a pattern of sound that serves his imaginative purpose ideally.

Listening to this opera from the wonderfully atmospheric recording, realistic in character, I found myself as in a trance passing from one disc side to another without losing the spell. In the recording, the dream-like effect has been further achieved by microphone tricks that make the voices of Miss Jessel and Quint, the departed governess and valet, ghostly in sound. The singers are excellent in their respective parts, notably Jennifer Vyvyan, Joan Cross and Peter Pears. David Hemmings, as the boy Miles, is also fine, giving a believable performance of a frustrated child. In the instrumental department, Martin Isepp's piano work is especially praiseworthy, but the whole ensemble under the direction of the composer is perfection itself throughout.

No one can predict how an opera like this will live with any listener. The reviewer in *The Gramophone* links it with Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* as the two finest, post-war operas on records. I do not think that he implies a comparison, for the two operas are quite different. Personally, I think the Britten work will sustain twice the interest of the Stravinsky score.

—P.H.R.



**MOZART:** *Don Giovanni* (Opera in 2 Acts); Suzanne Danco (Donna Anna), Lisa della Casa (Donna Elvira), Hilde Gueden (Zerlina), Anton Dermota (Don Ottavio), Cesare Siepi (Don Giovanni), Fernando Corena (Leporello), Kurt Boehme (Il Commendatore), Walter Berry (Masetto), Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus of the Vienna State Opera, Josef Krips (cond.). London set XLLA-34 (4 discs) \$19.92.

**THE SAME:** Hilde Zadek (Donna Anna), Sena Jurinac (Donna Elvira), Graziella Sciutti (Zerlina), Leopold Simoneau (Don Ottavio), George London (Don Giovanni), Walter Berry (Leporello), Ludwig Weber (Il Commendatore), Eberhard Wachter (Masetto), Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Choir, Rudolf Moralt (cond.). Epic set SC-6010 (3 discs) \$14.94.

▲**EARLY FRUIT** of the Mozart bicentennial celebrations, both these sets (especially the London) are handsomely recorded, and each represents a marked improvement in sonic terms over the 20-year-old Victor dubbing (LCT-6102) and the early LP vintage Haydn Society set (HSLP-2030).

Though it is the most expensive by one disc, the London *Don Giovanni* is nevertheless the one to acquire. Spreading the opera onto four discs has allowed for virtually unsullied sound even in the loudest passages, acceptable sidebreaks, and an ease that can be partially attributed to not having to watch the clock. Moreover, it is a superb musical performance which often achieves dramatic power and is so marvelously detailed that the score accompanying the set is almost unnecessary. Indeed if all the partitures of *Don Giovanni* suddenly vanished, one feels confident that the score could be reconstructed from this recording with almost every note in its proper place. This extraordinary clarity is due in no small measure to the precise direction of Krips and the transparency of the lovely sounds he elicits from the admissible players of the Vienna Philharmonic.

For musical taste and precision, the singers also deserve commendation; in vocal and dramatic matters, though they tarry on a high level, they are, as you would expect, unequal. Let us consider Suzanne Danco, controversially cast as Donna Anna. Her light voice is certainly not up to required dramatic-soprano specifications, but aided by modern microphone techniques it communicates the complex emotions of Donna Anna amazingly well. Moreover, Danco seems to dominate every ensemble in which she takes part by her sturdy musicianship. Here is an example of inspired miscasting. Perhaps the most brilliant dramatic performance is that offered by Corena. His Leporello is the real "common man" Mozart and his librettist da Ponte would seem to have had in mind—a serious fellow

in his way of looking at and reacting to the behavior of people around him. Corena sings with a style and a security that belie his relatively short acquaintance with the role. Siepi has a somewhat mealy bass for the title role, but it must be said that Mozart has brought out the best in this growing artist. Though he just fails to suggest the Don's aristocratic manner and passionate intensity, Siepi has covered himself with a deal of glory by conquering so many of the problems associated with this enormously difficult role. He is especially fine in the recitatives. The beautiful voice of della Casa is ample compensation for her slightly timid characterization, and her vocal velvet enriches many of the ensembles. Gueden, though she has a bit of trouble with some of Zerlina's long-breathed phrases, sings with apt and touching expression. Her *Batti, batti* is assuredly a bit of magic. The long phrases in the famous tenor arias give Dermota some trouble, too; but he gets through them with poise, and elsewhere he is stylish indeed.

The Epic set, though well recorded, is something of a disappointment; it does not seem very carefully prepared. Moralt has not given the production that sense of unity which attends effective renditions of this opera. Furthermore, the orchestra's playing lacks the polish and refinement of sound available in the London set. There are two outstanding performances, however, in Jurinac's convincing Donna Elvira and in Weber's authoritative Commendatore. On the other hand, Berry (the Masetto in the London version) is an adequate but by no means brilliant Leporello. The same may be said of Simoneau, who, on the basis of his fine work in the Angel *Così*, promised more than the Ottavio delivered. Zadek and Sciutti are not up to their competition; the former is vocally unstable, the latter is dramatically and musically colorless. These records indicate a shocking deterioration in the quality of London's singing. No longer than two seasons ago I heard London give a commanding performance of the Don at the Metropolitan Opera House. Here he displays the same penetrating mind at work, but lapses of vocal control do much to diminish the force of his strong conception: phrases are often explosive, dynamics are often exaggerated, much of the singing is rushed, and he is guilty of some wayward rhythm. It is hoped that his present vocal estate is temporary.

The long and justly famous Glyndebourne performance will continue to have its adherents, come what may. Those who have lived with it over the years may be reluctant to part with it, even if they acquire one of the newer sets; for it does boast in John Brownlee the most elegantly stylish and dramatically persuasive Don on record. Moreover, it provides in Ina Souez a superior Donna Anna with strong vocal attainments and arresting

temperament. Other attractive features are the firmly characterized Donna Elvira of Luise Helletsgruber; the sonorous, broadly detailed, and often appropriately humorous Leporello of Salvatore Baccaloni; and the excellent Masetto of Roy Henderson. Lastly, we have conductor Fritz Busch to thank for a unified performance which features uncommonly subtle dramatic and musical interplay born of high aesthetic standards and a spirit of teamwork achieved only through painstaking rehearsals and numerous theater performances. In transferring the 46 original 78 rpm sides of this recording to three LPs, there has been some sacrifice in regard to intelligent sidebreaks; e.g., Donna Anna's second-act aria is interrupted. —C.J.L.

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**RAMEAU:** *Hippolyte et Aricie—Excerpts*; Claudine Verneuil (Aricie), Geneviève Moizan (Phèdre), Flore Wend (Une Matelote, Une Chasserresse); Raymond Amade (Hippolyte), Chorus and Symphony Orchestra conducted by Roger Désormière. Oiseau-Lyre-London OL-50034, \$4.98.

▲**THERE** is melodic freshness and rhythmic variety in this early 18th-century opera, which made history in its day. The same recording was issued by Oiseau-Lyre in this country about five years ago. This re-issue offers brighter sonic values, especially on the upper end, but I found that added bass was required to balance the sound. The voices are clear and lifelike; the orchestra is not as satisfactory. The disc contains, I am told, the complete Act 4, two sailor's dances and a sailor's song (sung by a soprano, Flore Wend) from Act 3, and Aricie's lovely aria *Quel doux concerts* and an instrumental *Chaconne* from Act 5. The diversity and vitality of Rameau's operatic style is happily set forth in this music which is given an authentic performance here. Désormière's authoritative direction is especially praiseworthy though he seems to have had some difficulties in keeping all things shipshape at times. The best of the singers are Flore Wend and Raymond Amade. The former ingeniously alters her style to fit the young sailor and the huntress. A slight tape flaw in the final *Chaconne* results in a deviation from pitch; otherwise the overall results of this version are preferable to the older disc. —P.H.R.

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**VERDI:** *Aida* (complete); Zinka Milanov (Aida), Fedora Barbieri (Amneris), Jussi Bjoerling (Rhadames), Leonard Warren (Amonasro), Boris Christoff (Ramfis), Plinio Clabassi (The King), Mario Carlin (Messenger), Bruna Rizoli (Priestess), Rome Opera House Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Jonel Perlea. RCA Victor set LM-6122, 3 discs, \$11.94.

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# The Evolution of a Loudspeaker System

by George F. Varkonyi

*BECAUSE of the enthusiasm generated by the Varkon Loudspeaker System at both the 1954 and 1955 Audio Fairs in New York and Chicago, as well as the interest of many readers who have written us, we asked Mr. Varkonyi to tell us about its birth and development. Since many are constructing their own corner installations today, we believe that this article may well shed some new light on this particular problem in reproduction, which Mr. Varkonyi regards as a basic one. Your editor has had enough exposure to the Varkon enclosure, at the homes of several friends and his associate editor, Mr. Lyons, to appreciate its superiorities in a highly competitive field.*

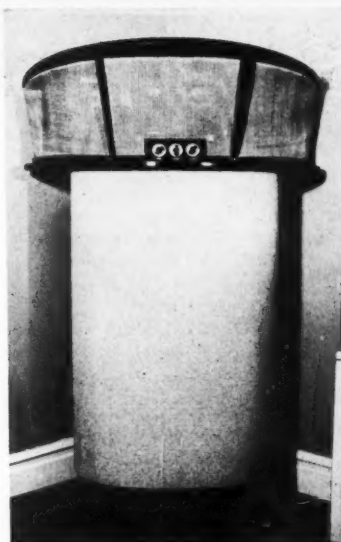
—P.H.R.

AS THIS series of articles on loudspeaker enclosures progressed it became inevitable that readers would request plans or instructions for building the Varkon used by Westminster for demonstration at the several audio fairs. The Varkon is a complex mechanism that does not lend itself to home construction. This notwithstanding, it may be of interest to review the evolution of this system since its pilot model was built in 1954. More particularly, the following may serve as a guide to those who are contemplating the construction of a new system. In effect, this article collates the basic thinking that has been set forth in a series of articles in this journal during the past year.

In the summer of 1954 I was approached by Henry L. Gage, vice president of the Westminster Recording Co., Inc., to design a loudspeaker system that would be the ultimate in sound reproduction and hence complementary to the then new "Laboratory Series". This request was prompted by Mr. Gage's having heard, and approved of, a number of my earlier installations.

The Chicago audio fair was due to open in an uncomfortably short time. But I proceeded to the designing at once. Obviously, the first step in any design process must be the precise definition of what the finished product is expected to do, along with the evaluation of concomitant limiting factors. The minimum requirements finally agreed to mutually were as follows:

Fig. 2—The Varkon Professional. The final development — 1955.



1—Highest quality sound possible, meaning full range, low distortion, and wide angle sound distribution.

2—High power capability, with ease. Anyone who has attended an audio show will understand this stipulation, for the maximum volume is a "must" if only to draw visitors from neighboring exhibits.

3—Sound quality relatively independent of the number of persons in the room. This consideration, non-critical in a home system, again is an essential of any demonstration set-up. Many a good system fails to impress under public circumstances because the "madding crowd" tends to absorb the highs.

4—Size to be as large as would be necessary for full bass reproduction and as small as possible to facilitate transportation. (Pass the aspirin.)

5—External appearance to be dictated by acoustic considerations but it had to be unique and even controversial to insure the attention of passers-by. (The theory was: Let them come to look but remain to listen.)

This was the beginning. Today, with all of the problems solved, their simplicity in retrospect is surprising. But in the midsummer of 1954 they seemed insurmountable.

To start with, a decision had to be made as between bass reflex, infinite baffle, and horn loading. The bass reflex was discarded because of its lack of absolutely clean, low frequency response cutoff. The infinite baffle was considered more seriously on account of its inherently low distortion but subsequently it was abandoned because of the large volume of air required for its enclosure, not to speak of the woofer battery that would have been needed for full air coupling at low frequencies.

By elimination, therefore, the choice fell on a folded exponential horn in tandem with a 15", 50-watt woofer. The cone resonance of 35 cps was a minimum requirement for the 30 cps low frequency cutoff desired. A lower resonance would have been more desirable but there are no units available with sufficient power for audio show purposes.

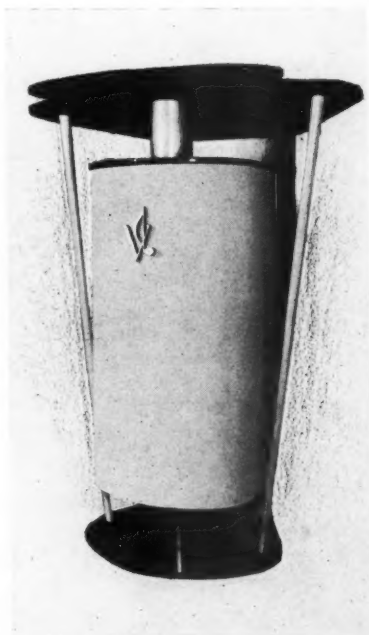


Fig. 1—The Varkon Exposition used by Westminster Records at the Audio Fair in 1954.

In order to load this woofer fully a flare rate below its resonance frequency was chosen. It was decided that the cross section area of the horn should be double every two feet, giving a cutoff of 32 cycles and response to 30 cycles. The most plaguing problem in horn design is the necessarily large mouth diameter needed for distortion-free bass. Calculation showed that for reasonable freedom from reflection at 30 cps an equivalent horn diameter in excess of 8' was indicated—a monster indeed. Although this is where most commercial horn loaded enclosures fall short, the problem turned out to be not insurmountable.

#### Placement of the Horn

Now, the placement of a large horn in the corner of a room increases the air load sufficiently to reduce the mouth reflection. The use of continuous curves in both the internal and (especially) external construction of the horn—where the low frequencies enter the room—and the use of a horn mouth twice the size of commercial units, resulted in unsurpassed bass quality. The handling of the back wave of the horn loaded driver poses a problem in all horns.

In the theater systems there is sufficient room backstage to use the horn itself as a baffle, although echo effects are a nuisance. In the usual home enclosure two methods are prevalent: One is to enclose the back of the woofer completely. Since enough space for a large cavity is not available it is customary to resonate it to extend low frequency response. I have an aversion to any resonant system because they tend to invite too much bass boom. The second method utilizes the radiation of both sides of the cone with an acoustic crossover. This kind of system is subject to interference at the crossover region, resulting in peaks and valleys in response. In the compromise adopted for the *Varkon* the woofer was mounted with its back exposed. With a sharp 300 cps crossover the back radiation below this frequency is relatively small compared with the horn efficiency; hence minimum interference.

The choice of crossover frequencies is dependent upon the overall capability of the system. Very low bass crossover is desirable provided the mid-range unit can handle its share adequately. The lowest mid-range horn available could be used as low as 300 cycles, and this determined the low frequency crossover. The other crossover—4000 cps—was arrived at as follows. It was well within the capability of both the mid-range unit and the contemplated tweeter. Also, a break at 4000 is hardly noticeable because it is outside the fundamental musical range and allowed for the greatest flexibility in balancing. In the ideal horn loaded enclosure the pack lengths of the various units should be the same to avoid phase distortion at the crossover frequencies. Unfortunately, low frequency

horns are invariably longer than the other units unless driven by an excessively large woofer. In theater installations it is common practice to push the high frequencies behind the woofer units to equalize the difference of path length—an expedient impossible in the average room for obvious reasons.

Ultimately, the solution of this problem served a two-fold purpose. It was decided to inject the mid-range horn into the main horn at a point equidistant from the two drivers. This not only resolved the phasing dilemma but it also diffused the mid-range by using the walls of the low frequency horn as reflectors. The use of indirect radiation was carried through in the tweeter as well. It was faced upwards so that the brass column supporting the top of the enclosure acted as a reflector for the highs. It was all of this indirect radiation that accounted for the wide angle, realistically even sound distribution of the first *Varkon*.

The enclosure enjoyed considerable success at the fairs. As is always the case with pilot models, however, it fell short of the goal of perfection. Following the New York fair of 1954 the strong points and weaknesses were re-evaluated and the conclusions were these:

- 1—The 300 cps low frequency crossover seemed too high in a system that aimed for perfect reproduction.
- 2—The tonal superiority of direct radiation in an infinite baffle made it preferable to a horn loaded compression driver.
- 3—The back wave problem was not altogether solved.
- 4—The compression-type tweeter exhibited a slight metallic ring and, to my ears at least, seemed inferior to the cone-type tweeter.
- 5—The inclusion of front panel controls for a professional system seemed a "must" for flexible handling.
- 6—Transportation was difficult because of undue size and complexity of assembly.
- 7—The appearance, though startling, was not suitable for general use.

Time was no longer pressing, so that there was ample opportunity at this point for redesigning. It was decided that no changes would be made that would compromise the fine low frequency response, diffusion and low distortion of the original unit. After a complete study of horn loading versus the infinite baffle I arrived at the following conclusions:

- 1—For clarity and balance of the mid-range the infinite baffle won hands down, particularly if a multiple array of small (say, 8") speakers were to be employed. The multiple small light cones gave better transient response and superior coupling to a single larger unit.
- 2—The horn showed marked superiority over any practical infinite baffle at very

low frequencies, particularly in efficiency and low frequency presence. The determining of a low crossover frequency became the key to the whole problem and the use of the infinite baffle became the key to the use of the low crossover—an ideal state seldom encountered in loudspeaker design. The 150 cycle crossover for the horn offered no difficulty because the use of four 8" direct radiation middle speakers easily covered a range below 100 cps. A lower crossover was neither necessary nor desirable since it approached the resonance of the infinite baffle system. The design of the low frequency horn of the original *Varkon* was so sound that it proved resistant to any change. However by mounting the woofer on top of the enclosure the top itself was made to serve as a baffle, thus eliminating any interference effects that might have lingered. The 150 cps crossover was so low that even a 15" woofer was relatively inefficient as compared with the horn and caused little back wave interference.

For home use, however, the *Varkon* uses a high grade 12" woofer for minimum interference.

#### The Tweeter

Next, the tweeter problem was attacked. Brilliance was of course desirable but not a shrillness. Strings should shimmer, not screech. Considerable success has been achieved along these lines with face-up cone tweeters, making for a pleasing high frequency response. The first tests were promising and the pilot model included this set-up. In all of my work I use a "jury" for the final evaluation and in this case the practice brought about an interesting revision of design. One of the more athletic members of my "jury" kept climbing higher and higher, from chairs to tables to what-have-you, as he listened. The quality of sound, he claimed, improved as he went up. I very unscientifically made light of this. Later on I got to thinking about it, however, and as you can guess I could not resist the temptation to verify my friend's observation. To my chagrin, I found that he had been absolutely right. The obvious answer—although it had not been obvious a few minutes before—was that the tweeters were faced up. So that, when one listened from a height, the effect was as if the tweeter were faced right at one. It seemed sensible to reverse the early design simply by facing the tweeter straight out. At least that would have been more sensible than to have suggested that the listener dangle himself from a chandelier. And so it came to pass that in the later model the two tweeters were placed horizontally, facing out at slight angles from each other for full room coverage.

Presence is an illusion, of course, that only faithful reproduction and a high quality sound source can achieve. It has been found that a discreet increase in the 2000 to 4000 cps range can produce a



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startling effect of realism. Following this line of thought and extending it, a small directional horn was placed in the enclosure to cover the "presence" range between 2000 and 4000 cps. The use of a directional horn seems to contradict all previous design principles having to do with diffusion. But I reasoned that a noticeable single point source in the same range, surrounded by a completely diffused overall range, could enhance the separation of instruments and give them a three-dimensional effect. This was to be controlled at the will of the operator since, for some music, it would not be desirable. The results were fascinating. On some recordings the solos actually seemed to be coming from somewhere apart from the orchestra. Discretion must be the by-word in the employment of this facility. It is only a tool to be used sparingly.

These controls finally were mounted on the front panel. The bass controls could be used to match the acoustic properties and also, by virtue of the low crossover, to reduce the low frequency disturbance. The presence control for enhancing the illusion of realism, and a brilliance control for balancing the highs and also for controlling high frequency noise.

The subsequent streamlining of the complete unit finished the re-design. In order to facilitate transportation, all of the driver units, controls and network were mounted in the top section. This was made removable from the basic horn section. Now the enclosure could be moved with relative ease; six screws only were required for assembly.

This final model exceeded our expectations, as you may have assumed upon hearing it yourself at one or another of the audio fairs.

## OPERA SPOTLIGHT

(Continued from page 40)

▲THIS performance of *Aida* may well make history in more ways than one. First, for the splendid singing of Milanov, who in recent years has closely identified herself with the name role in a manner that leaves no doubt in mind that she is one of the finest Aidas of modern times, despite some edgy tones in the earlier scenes and a suggestion of a wobble on occasion. Second, for the dramatic thrust of Perlea's conducting—the vitality and fervor he brings to those sections of the score that demand this treatment. He gives a lift to the performance that no other conductor has done to date on records, albeit at the expense of some singers in the big ensembles where the orchestral volume, probably due to the realistic engineering pursued throughout, is a surging tide of sound. But this is a full-blooded performance of *Aida*, no

tepid tea from the orchestra pit. For most part, the singers hug their microphones and their voices are close up, except where atmosphere essential to the scene demands a more remote position.

The cast is an all-around well chosen one. Surprisingly, Bjoerling, though essentially a lyric tenor proves himself a first-rate Rhadames, whose singing unlike Gigli's is never on a dead level. Of course, his voice is overamplified to sound larger and unnaturally robust, and he does push it unduly on occasion. However, on the whole, he is in fine fettle and only in the final part of the third act duet, *Ah no!*, does he strain his vocal resources, but even here he gets by. Of course, some trick microphone work was necessary to make the tenor's voice large enough to compete with Milanov's. In the big ensembles in the second act, however, his voice is often obscured. In the opera house, the tenor would be less satisfying as Rhadames, but on records with the aid of special microphoning he is convincing. His ability to color his voice and sing softly when required is in his favor, with the result that his and Milanov's singing of the final duet is the most ingratiating so far in a complete recording of the opera.

To return to Milanov, hers is more mature *Aida* than Tebaldi's. The latter is often more youthful but her upper tones are too consistently edgy, whereas Milanov's vocal opulence prevails except for a few points where her high tones become unduly strident at climactic moments. Both achieve a degree of expressiveness and both can float lovely soft top tones. Milanov's longer familiarity with the role is in her favor at this point, despite her vocal shortcomings. Her *O patria mia* is a memorable moment—the best performance so far in a complete performance.



Richard Lewis as Troilus

Barbieri has youth on her side and she knows how to act with her voice, but she spreads on her high tones and sometimes seems slightly under pitch. Stignani is often more impressive in the climactic moments, but both she and Barbieri are lacking in vocal subtlety. The youthful beauty of Barbieri's voice, however, is in her favor.

Warren is an impressive Amanosro, notably in the second act, where he easily dominates the scene. The third act duet finds him unable to cope with the quicker sections as effectively as Protti does. However, his portrayal of the Ethiopian King is more compelling. Christoff is an impressive Ramfis with a metallic ring to his voice, and Clabassi is a rich voiced King. The orchestra and chorus acquit themselves in the traditionally fine manner of Italian musicians who deem their opera house a second home. From the sonic side, this performance is extraordinary in its realistic impact. —P.H.R.

**WALTON:** *Scenes from Troilus and Cressida*; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Cressida), Richard Lewis (Troilus), Monica Sinclair (Evadne), John Hauxwell (The Watchman), the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir William Walton. Angel 35278 (with libretto) \$4.98 or \$3.48 (without libretto).

▲THIS opera has had considerable success in England, San Francisco and New York. It is one of the finest works that Walton has composed, placing him in a new light and in a medium that he might well pursue. Not only has the opera vital and surging passion in the music but also a fine libretto—a poetic treatise that could hardly have failed to inspire any composer. It is the work of Christopher Hassall, a well known English poet and actor. The story was derived from Greek antiquity by way of Chaucer, and Hassall has wisely emphasized the ruling passion of the heroine as Chaucer sketched her. I have not as yet heard the New York production of the opera but look forward to hearing it after listening to these recorded scenes, which assuredly are convincingly contrived. Walton's orchestral texture recalls Strauss in its full-bodied richness, and yet it is far less obvious in its technical prowess and fervor. It gives life to the characters with its melodic sweep, tenderness and passion. The music is not modern in the sense of disfiguring dissonance or unintermittent continuity. For these scenes suggest set pieces that serve the singers advantageously. In this respect it is more of a singers' opera than most we get today.

The scenes include Troilus' first act aria, *Is Cressida a slave?*, the duet between Troilus and Cressida that follows, and Cressida's later aria *Slowly it all comes back—out of my childhood*, another aria

of Cressida from Act 2, skipping to the Love Duet which is followed by an orchestral interlude depicting a storm and sunrise, the scene from Act 3 between Cressida and Evadne where the former anxiously awaits word of Troilus' prowess in battle, and then skips to the death of Cressida, the end of the opera.

The singing of Richard Lewis and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf deserves the highest praise. This gifted English tenor reveals a new facet of his artistry—his ability to cope successfully with a dramatic role that makes considerable demands on his voice, yet he suggests no strain at any time. The Love Duet has a gruelling tessitura, ascending to a high *C sharp* with an orchestral sweep that could easily prove disconcerting to less accomplished artists. Miss Schwarzkopf's artistic attributes are revealed at every point in these scenes; her only fault lies in some difficulties with the English language. The other singers in these scenes have little to do, but what they do is well enough done. Not all composers could achieve the vitality and passion that Walton brings to his orchestral direction. The Philharmonia Orchestra responds to his leadership as though it had played this work many times which suggests sufficient rehearsals to satisfy the composer. Soundwise, this recording is superb, not alone for tonal richness but for balance between the singers and the orchestra. I recommend that all operatic

enthusiasts hear this disc—it is one of the better operatic ventures in the English language. —P.H.R.

**COLORATURA-LYRIC:** *Adriana Lecouvreur*—*Io sono l'umile ancella and Poveri fiori* (Cilea); *Andrea Chenier*—*La mamma morta* (Giordano); *La Wally*—*Ebben? ne andro lontana* (Catalani); *Mefistofele*—*L'altra notte* (Boito); *Barbiere*—*Una voce poco fa* (Rossini); *Dinorah*—*Ombra leggiera* (Meyerbeer); *Lakmé*—*Bell Song* (Delibes); *I Vespri Siciliani*—*Bolero* (Verdi); Maria Meneghini Callas with Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Tullio Serafin. Angel 35233, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THAT Maria Callas has upset all our preconceived ideas of specialization by singers in carefully selected roles is more than ever demonstrated in this record, where she displays her two-fold prowess as coloratura and lyrico-dramatic soprano.

One should not be able to record a complete Santuzza as well as Callas has done, and then reel off the vertiginous *Bell Song* from *Lakmé*, in the original key with equal success.

The overwhelming virtues and the disturbing faults of Mme. Callas' singing are never more apparent than in this record, which not only shows off her astounding versatility, but also the deficiencies that keep her short of being the perfect vocalist, a vocalist such as Melba was. Where Melba had a scale like matched pearls, a perfect trill, and brilliant, steady fortissimo high notes, Callas cannot compete. However, in all fairness, the current soprano possesses a warmth, a versatility and an ability to characterize her roles that the Australian skylark could not approach within her perfect but limited range.

Lovely indeed is Callas' singing of the aria from *La Wally* and of the two by Cilea. Here, she is at her best.

Her *Una voce poco fa* is a compromise, sung in the original mezzo key, but with plenty of lofty embellishments. Her aria from *Mefistofele* is the most atmospheric on records, while her scale work in the *Dinorah* show-piece is astounding. Her *Bolero* from *Vespri Siciliani*, however, lacks rhythmic dash and brilliance. Like Tebaldi, Callas sets her own tempi, and Tullio Serafin is more than careful in following her intentions. —M.de S.

**ARIAS AND DUETS** from *Rigoletto*; Arias from *Coq d'or*, *Manon*, *La Sonnambula* and *Lakmé*; Mattiwillda Dobbs (soprano), Rolando Panerai (baritone), the Philharmonia Orchestra, Alceo Galliera, conductor. Angel 35095, \$4.98 and \$3.98.

▲The talented Mattiwillda Dobbs is here presented in arias and duets from *Rigoletto* with Rolando Panerai, and in an operatic recital of her own on the reverse side of the disc.

Miss Dobbs is a musical charmer; here is a distinct personality. However, it must be said that she is least effective in the Italian arias, which include an uneven *Ah, non credea* from *Sonnambula*. The young soprano betrays an immaturity of style, which is not evident in her French arias, where she is at her best. The two passages from *Lakmé* (not the *Bell Song*) suit her to perfection, and she makes a capital Manon in her spirited singing of the *Gavotte*. Her *Hymn to the Sun* from *Coq d'or* (sung in English) is the most attractive since Mabel Garrison's lovely acoustical disc of many years ago.

Panerai's voice is notable for solidity and resonance. The quality is not outstanding nor is he a master of *belcanto* in the sense that De Luca was. But there is much that is expressive and idiomatic about his *Pari Siamo*, his first duet with Gilda, and the final scene of the opera. Miss Dobbs' *Caro Nome* will please the "sincere avowal of a young girl" school of thought. Personally, I will not object to the magic of a Tetrizzini or a Galli-Curci, or the prima-donna atmosphere generated by Melba.

The Philharmonia Orchestra sounds coarse and hard driven under Alceo Galliera, especially in the duets, where Miss Dobbs has difficulty in being heard. Recording is not Angel's silkiest, but surfaces, texts and the often lovely singing make this disc desirable. —M.deS.

**CLAUDEL-MILHAUD:** *Christophe Colomb* (Complete); Madeleine Renaud (Columbus), Madeleine Renaud (Isabella) and the Renaud-Barraut company with an unidentified orchestra conducted by Pierre Boulez. London International set TW-91085, \$9.96.

▲THIS is not Milhaud's opera of the same name, nor does it bear any significant musical resemblance or relationship to that work. This is a play with incidental music (in all about an hour's music) and most of it represents Milhaud at his very best. I will not comment on the drama except to note that the composer found it worthy of his having "devoted my attention with all my heart". Taken together, the effect is stunning. Those who have come to know Honegger's big machines at their true value will be impressed with this evidence of Milhaud's even more commanding sense of theater. The story of Columbus would be enough to stir any composer's imagination, heaven knows. It is our good fortune that the great Milhaud was caught up with it. There is nothing in this score that is not characteristic of his recent style, but one is in any event more concerned with the musico-dramatic effectiveness. That is complete. The recorded sound is good. The orchestra sounds just a bit ragged once in a while, but who are we to complain when Milhaud himself says in the notes that the performance is perfect? —J.L.

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# Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

## ORCHESTRA

**BARTOK:** *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*; **KODALY:** *Hary Janos—Suite*; London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Georg Solti. London LP LL-1230, \$3.98.

▲ALTHOUGH there have been other superlative versions of these vivid scores, the new readings by Georg Solti command the attention of the record collector. Here we have idiomatic, sensitive, vivid performances impeccably recorded. The Bartók score, in particular, sounds better to these ears than any earlier recording. There is a sweep and flow to the performance seldom encountered in the concert hall or recording.

The excerpts from Kodály's opera are also splendidly set forth. Here again we have realistic, spacious recorded sound. —R.R.

**BARANOVICH:** *The Gingerbread Heart—Ballet Suite*; Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kreshimir Baranovich; **LHOTKA:** *The Devil in the Village—Ballet Suite*; Zagreb National Opera House Orchestra conducted by Fran Lhotka. London LP LL-1235, \$3.98.

▲KRESHIMIR BARANOVICH (born July 25, 1894) is a well-known Yugoslavian composer and conductor, at present professor at the Belgrade Academy of Music and conductor at the National Opera in that city. His ballet, *The Gingerbread Heart*, was first performed in Zagreb in 1924 and has become something of a classic in Yugoslavia. It is a melodious score, abounding with stimulating rhythms and colorful orchestral effects. Influences of Smetana, Dvorak and other central European composers may be felt, but there is also a strong individuality in the melodic content. The present performance under the composer's direction must be considered authentic. The sound is splendid throughout.

On the reverse side we have another ballet score from Yugoslavia, this one composed by Fran Lhotka (born on Christmas, 1883). He studied with Dvorak and Janacek, so it is not too surprising that his music has strong influences of these composers. His ballet, *The Devil*

in the Village, has been performed throughout Europe, and was recently seen in London, as was the Baranovich work. Here again we have an authentic performance under the direction of the composer. Again wonderful sound. —R.R.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Concerto in D, Op. 61*; Nathan Milstein (violin) with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Steinberg. Capitol P-8313, \$4.98.

▲WITHOUT a moment's doubt I would place this 19th version with the very best, and for unalloyed loveliness of overall sound I would place it well ahead of anything on the market. I mean by that use of "overall" the sound produced as well the sound reproduced, for this seems to me far and away the most faithful semblance of a live performance of this work that I have encountered on records. Milstein has long delayed tackling the Beethoven on LP. Not only has his art matured appreciably in recent years, but also engineers now know better what they are doing. So that this collaboration comes closer to recorded perfection than any other currently available. Oistrakh's (the Angel version) is violinistically the most exciting but rather dully accompanied. Steinberg runs the show at hand with his usual extraordinary skill. Sobriety is perhaps the right word for Milstein's performance, as if he were somewhat awed by the gravity of his assignment. This extends to his cadenzas—they are his own—which are not so much virtuosic take-offs as serious extensions of the foregoing material. How anyone could hear this through and not be deeply touched I do not understand.

—J.L.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Concerto No. 1 in C, Op. 15; Sonata No. 14 in C minor, Op. 27, No. 2*; Geza Anda (piano) with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Alceo Galliera. Angel LP disc 35248, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THE YOUNG but already-somewhat-celebrated Hungarian pianist Geza Anda will make his first appearances in America within a fortnight. Previous records

have shown his unusual talent for performing 19th-century romantic piano literature, and this beautifully recorded disc gives us a glimpse of his capacities for handling the classical Viennese style. The very fine Beethoven *C major Concerto* can reveal a great deal about a pianist; it tests Anda's powers certainly. He delivers a clear, straightforward, and tonally lovely performance that is an effective statement of the music. With the solid support he receives from the Philharmonia under the reliable Galliera and from the E.M.I. engineers, Anda has given us playing anyone can enjoy. But if you are looking for a little miracle here and there or patches of incandescence, you will be disappointed. There is little wit in the final movement, not much dramatic tension in the opening section. I am inclined to think that no one on LP has matched Schnabel's wonderful 1933 performance of this concerto, but Gieseking is surely not too far behind (and he is helped by a postwar recording).

Anda impresses a bit more in the "Moonlight" sonata, where much of his playing is entirely satisfying. He does manage the piano with such taste: everything is clean and airy and he seems incapable of producing thick, muddy, or percussive tone. All the same, I must continue to recommend Ania Dorfmann's superb performance of this popular sonata for its greater expressive realization.

—C.J.L.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 4 in B flat, Op. 60; Ah, Perfido!*; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (soprano), Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel LP disc ANG. 35203, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲INTEREST in this well-recorded issue is more apt to center on Schwarzkopf's singing of the fine concert aria *Ah, Perfido!* than on Karajan's clean, detailed, musical, but unexciting account of the Beethoven *Fourth*. Miss Schwarzkopf gives an effective performance in her own way. That way is one that revels in expressive detail, that constantly aims for variety of utterance. This fine singer is one of the few today who has sufficient command of her vocal resources to enable her to take such an approach. All the same, she does not have that rocklike steadiness of technique that would have made the version really memorable. Because of this, her performance seems just a trifle calculated, and one misses the proper degree of spontaneity. Those who recall the 78 recording of Flagstad's simple, direct interpretation may find in Schwarzkopf's ambitious but more mannered singing the difference which makes comparison of performances fascinating; but some will continue to prefer Flagstad, I imagine, and wish that RCA Victor would make this example of her art available on LP.

—C.J.L.

**BRAHMS:** *The Symphonies* (complete); *Tragic Overture*; *Academic Festival Overture*; *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, Op. 56-a; *Alto Rhapsody*; Monica Sinclair (contralto) and the Chorus of the Croydon Philharmonic Society (in the last-listed) with the Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra of London conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster WN-4401, \$19.92.

▲ENGLAND being a last stronghold of Brahmsian sentiment, the worthiness of this enterprise should startle no one. Dollar for dollar, I would place it a notch above the comparable Columbia omnibus of several months ago. That is a tall statement, implying as it does that the staid Boult gives more value than the venerable Walter. Still, the latter worked with the New York Philharmonic, which is not noted for its tonal sheen and which has not in my time manifested the slightest affinity to this repertory. Boult's forces (the soubriquet disguises a superb London orchestra) may be said on the evidence to possess both of these assets. There is in addition the familiar sumptuousness of Westminster's sound. True, Walter's interpretations were surfeited with the requisite *Gemuetlichkeit* while Boult's are conservative to say the least, but the recurrent stolidity does not constitute any substantial grounds for complaint. The contralto soloist in the *Rhapsody* (not included in the Walter sequence) does not efface the golden memories of Ferrier or the Anderson of long ago, but she sings with melting poignance all the same. —J.L.

**BRUCKNER:** *Symphony No. 1 in C Minor*; the Vienna Orchestral Society conducted by F. Charles Adler. Unicorn UNLA-1015, \$4.98.

**BRUCKNER:** *Symphony No. 7 in E; Overture in G Minor*; respectively the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Willem van Otterloo. Epic set SC-6006, \$9.96.

▲THE new *Seventh* is in no way superior to Van Beinum's magnificent performance but it is at least almost as good, which may be good enough for those who would rather have the wonderful little *G Minor Overture* than Franck's (abridged) *Psyché*. Nor does the bottom-heavy Epic characteristic seem inappropriate with late Bruckner. The transparency of his earlier works would be diffused by it. Fortunately, then, the promising young Unicorn label conforms to the New Orthophonic curve. And the busy F. Charles Adler conforms to the highest of his own criteria, which are quite high as regards this repertory. The *First* has needed a recording for some time now, a dated version on the Masterseal label being long extinct. I heartily commend to it all of those folk who feel that this

composer wrote overlong and uninterestingly, because it provides a most palatable introductory dose of the formula that was to be the base of his stronger medicine yet to come. For its own sake, the *First* is a fine symphony, structurally taut and expressively to the point. Uncommonly good program notes by Warren Storey Smith, Boston's distinguished critic emeritus. —J.L.

**HONEGGER:** *Pacific 231*; *Rugby*; *Mouvement symphonique no. 3*; *Prélude pour "La tempête"*; Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Westminster W-LAB 7010, \$7.50.

▲FIRST venture into *terra incognita* for Westminster's burgeoning "Laboratory" Series. A sensational release. The sound *nonpareil*, the performances surcharged, the program of compelling musical interest. Of the four works listed above, concertgoing old timers will remember that the first two have to do programmatically with a locomotive and a spectator sport (rugby being the English equivalent of football). The other pair are less well known. Respectively the dates are 1923, 1928, 1933, and 1923, spanning the decade of the composer's thirties. This was unquestionably his first real productive period, *King David* having been completed in 1921. It was astute of Westminster to couple the first three of these pieces, because they were conceived as a triptych and should be heard that way. The fourth is an astringent needle bath of four minutes' duration that probably was included only to fill out the disc. Of late we have been subjected to heavy doses of the mystical later Honegger. These tableaux from his muscular, unhesitatingly dissonant early years will help to put right our generally imbalanced perspective. —J.L.

**IVES:** *Symphony No. 3*; **DONOVAN:** *Suite for String Orchestra and Oboe*; Alfred Genovese (oboe, in the latter) and the Baltimore Little Symphony conducted by Reginald Stewart. Vanguard VRS-468, \$4.98.

▲STEWART elects somewhat more driving tempi than we have been accustomed to in the wonderful Ives symphony; presumably he was convinced that dawdling over the *longeurs* would do the late composer an injustice. One of the unique things about this work, nevertheless, is its subtle interplay of rhythms, the effect under ideal circumstances being rather like turning a prism over and over in the hand, turning it this way and that. Stewart does not go along with this notion, but the score undeniably has enough resilience to emerge from his treatment alive and glowing. Give him this, at least: he limns details that were lost in the now withdrawn Bales recording. But I will not part with the latter, all the same.

(When will someone get Leonard Bernstein to conduct the Ives *Second* for LP? His way with this piece is a wonder of interpretation.) Donovan's slender suite is by definition a charmer; you can't beat oboe and strings for listenability no matter the idiom, which in Donovan's case is non-acerb stylized folk. The sound is on a par with the current best. —J.L.

**MOZART:** *Concerto in G major, K. 216*; *Concerto in E flat major, K. 268*; Christian Ferras (violin) and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra conducted by Karl Münchinger. London LP LL-1172, \$3.98.

▲CHRISTIAN FERRAS plays these two Mozart concertos with tonal beauty and aristocratic style. In the G major work he receives excellent support from the conductor, but in the less familiar E flat major score there is a somewhat stodgy quality in the accompaniment. The authenticity of the score is questionable, but it makes pleasant listening. It is Mozartean if not genuine Mozart. The notes discuss the problems involved with the work quite effectively. It is a pity the whole piece does not come off as well as the solo playing. According to the notes the cadenzas used are "of composite authorship". The recorded sound is excellent, with good balance between Mr. Ferras and the orchestra.

This seems to be the only version currently available of K. 268, although there are several of K. 216, notably by Arthur Grumiaux and Simon Goldberg. —R.R.

**MOZART:** *Serenade No. 4 in D major, K. 203*; New Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Peter Maag. London LP LL-1206, \$3.98.

▲MOZART'S *Serenade in D major, K. 203* was composed in Salzburg in August, 1774. It is unusually elaborate, containing eight movements in contrasting tempos. The second, third and fourth movements are actually an interpolated violin concerto, although the plan is somewhat different from the classical concerto. The soloist in the performance is not identified in the notes nor on the record label. The performance is graceful well proportioned, with the requisite style. Mr. Maag has some excellent performances of Mozart symphonies on the London label, so it is with pleasure that the present release may be recommended as well. The recorded sound is clean and bright. An earlier performance on by the Scarlatti Orchestra of Naples under Bernhard Paumgartner is outclassed by this release. —R.R.

**PAGANINI:** *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D*; *Violin Concerto No. 4 in D minor*; respectively Herman Krebbers (violin) with the Hague Philharmonic



# TEATRO ALLA SCALA



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BELLINI

Norma.....Maria Meneghini Callas  
Adalgisa.....Ebe Stignani  
Pollione.....Mario Filippeschi  
Oroveso.....Nicola Rossi-Lemeni  
Flavio.....Paolo Caroli  
Clotilde.....Rina Cavallari

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Arthur.....Giuseppe Di Stefano  
Sir George.....Nicola Rossi-Lemeni  
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Conductor: TULLIO SERAFIN

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Butterfly.....Maria Meneghini Callas  
Suzuki.....Lucia Danieli  
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B. F. Pinkerton.....Nicola Gedda  
Sharpless.....Mario Borriello  
Goro.....Renato Ercolani  
Prince Yamadori.....Mario Carlin  
The Bonze.....Plinio Clabassi  
Imperial Commissioner.....Enrico Campi

Conductor: HERBERT VON KARAJAN

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VERDI

Leonora.....Maria Meneghini Callas  
Don Alvaro.....Richard Tucker  
Don Carlo.....Carlo Tagliabue  
Preziosilla.....Elena Nicolai  
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Fra Melitone.....Renato Capecchi

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Soloists

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Di Stefano • Siepi

Conductor: VICTOR DE SABATA

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VERDI

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Radames.....Richard Tucker  
Amneris.....Fedora Barbieri  
Amonasro.....Tito Gobbi  
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Conductor: TULLIO SERAFIN

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ROSSINI

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Don Narciso.....Nicola Gedda  
Zaida.....Jolanda Gardino  
Don Geronio.....Franco Calabrese  
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Lindoro.....Cesare Valletti  
Zulma.....Mafalda Masini  
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Orchestra conducted by Willem van Otterloo and Arthur Grumiaux (violin) with L'Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux conducted by Franco Gallini. Epic LC-3143, \$4.98.

▲SO now the legendary concerto "*réservé aux Parisiens*" may be heard by all, thanks to the diligence of Natale Gallini, who found its solo part in Bottesini's double bass library after owning the manuscript of the orchestral score for several frustrating years. The work was written in 1830 for Paganini's conquest of Paris the following year; at the time he publicly announced that he would play it nowhere else. He kept his word. Only in 1936, when Gallini's "torso without a head" turned up in a bale of old paper, did the world remember its existence. All credit to the senior Gallini, and to his son, who conducts this carefully prepared revival. Grumiaux is of course a first class virtuoso, and there can be no cavil with his wizardry in the absence of a score. Stylistically the work reveals nothing that is not in the thrice-familiar *D major*, although one infers that it is even more difficult to play. Krebbers is a solid violinist, temperamentally a bit uncomfortable with these histrionics but nothing daunted by them. Resonant recordings. —J.L.

●  
**PAGANINI:** *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D. Op. 6*; **GLAZUNOV:** *Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 81*; Michael Rabin (violin) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Lovro von Matacic. Angel 35259, \$3.48 or \$4.98.

▲YOUNG Rabin (he is now going on 20) bids fair to be one of our finest artists over the long pull. His tone is large and molten silver in quality. Also, his intonation is a marvel. In the Paganini, however, he indulges in far too many caprices (no pun intended) for the purist taste. He keeps slowing down and speeding up and slowing down again in a way that focuses the listener's attention on the music instead of on the performance—which is not the way it is supposed to be with Paganini. In the Glazunov he tends to rather slowish tempi throughout, which is all right because this work can stand whatever *cantabile* circumlocutions a soloist elects as long as he keeps on fiddling in the grand manner. And this Rabin most emphatically does. Comparatively, of course, he is not in the Milstein league, and the latter's Glazunov will be for me until such time as Heifetz decides to have another go at it. But if this coupling appeals you can't go wrong. Good accompaniments. Entirely acceptable sound. —J.L.

●  
**RIMSKY-KORSAKOV:** *Scheherazade, Op. 35*; L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London LP LL-1162, \$3.98.

▲ERNEST Ansermet's reading of Rimsky-Korsakov's ever-popular *Scheherazade* has been justly praised through the years. His earlier recording (London LL-6) has been one of the most sought-after renditions of the score for some time. The sound was satisfactory when it was released, but tremendous improvements have been made in recordings in the intervening years. Now we have a new and superlative performance that puts most other versions in the shade. The Paris Conservatory Orchestra sounds almost unbelievably realistic, with plenty of bite and color. Pierre Nerini is the expert violin soloist.

Since the older version has been so popular through the years, London plans on retaining the number (LL-6) in the catalogue for the present, but substituting the new recording. —R.R.

●  
**SAINT-SAËNS:** *Cello Concerto in A minor*; **LALO:** *Cello Concerto in D minor*; André Navarra (cello) and the Orchestra of the Paris Opera conducted by Emanuel Young. Capitol P-8318, \$4.98.

▲DIRECT comparison with the London coupling, which is the only similar one, gives Navarra the edge in terms tonal and virtuosic—but perhaps not by a sufficient margin to warrant an extra dollar's investment, unless you happen to be an *aficionado* to whom Navarra's special sumptuousness of execution makes the price differential of no consequence. I say watch this fellow. Excepting Starker and sometimes Gendron and Rose, I know of no cellist now before the public who commands his instrument with such imperious disdain of executive problems, and who so thoroughly understands its potential for sheer beauty of sound. Only Rose is competitive in the Saint-Saëns, and that recording (coupled with *Schelomo*) is rather along in years. Oddly enough the Michelin version of the Lalo seems to me the most nearly convincing stylistically, but not even the exquisite Fauré *Elégie* on its overside saves that Concert Hall disc from disqualification on the same grounds. —J.L.

●  
**SCHUBERT:** *Symphony No. 7 (or 9) in C ("The Great")*; Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster WN-or SWN-18026, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲AFTER the hair-raising Toscanini performance it is not easy to be receptive to such straightforward sequels as this. But we are bound to remind ourselves that the standard repertory is so-called because its contents have proved durable under all conditions, and there can be no objection, now really, to a conductor's letting these scores unfold without the slightest interposition of personality. Boult's conception, if one can call it that, adduces nothing beyond the printed

page. Some would find the result *routinier*; others would deem them simple justice to the composer. The orchestral playing is superb, the recorded sound decidedly of the best. —J.L.

●  
**SLAVENSKI:** *Sinfonia Orienta*; Melanie Bugarinovitch (contralto), Dushan Tzveych (tenor), Dushan Popovich (baritone), Zharko Tzveych (bass) with Chorus and Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Zhika Zdravkovich. London LP LL-1216, \$3.98.

▲JOSIP SLAVENSKI (born May 11, 1896) is at present teaching at the Belgrade Conservatory. He has composed a large number of works, instrumental, chamber, vocal and orchestral, few of which have been performed outside of his native Yugoslavia. Like Janacek and Bartók, he has been influenced by folk music, and like the former, has experimented with polytonality and microtones. His researches have led to the foundation of a "natural-tone" system of 53 tones to the octave.

The *Sinfonia Orienta*, written in 1933-34, is a remarkable score, a setting of ancient texts in their original languages, attempting to survey the history of Man's efforts to express religious belief through music. The work has seven movements, bearing the subtitles *Pagans (Prehistoric music)*, *Hebrews (Musica coloristica)*, *Buddhists (Musica architectonica)*, *Christians (Musica melodica)*, *Moslems (Musica articulata)*, *Free Thought (Musica polifonica)*, *Hymn of Toil (Musica harmoniae)*. Instruments imitate the effects of the ancient psalter, chail and shofar in the second section, while in the third and fourth movements, the chorus has a setting of the Buddhist refrain, *Om Mani Padme Hum* and the *Kyrie Eleison*. The orientalisms are most pronounced in the section depicting the Moslems. The final section, representing religion of our own time, has a text by the composer. Stylistically it looks towards the East and the choruses of the popular Soviet composers.

There can be nothing but praise for the performance. The soloists and chorus are outstanding and the recorded sound is about as splendid as one will find on records today. This powerful, spectacular score will repay repeated hearings, especially when performed as it has been in the present recorded version. —R.R.

●  
**STRAUSS:** *Schlagobers* (Complete Ballet Score *Op. 70*); the Frankland State Symphony Orchestra of Nuremberg conducted by Erich Kloss. Lyricord set LL-41, \$11.90.

▲HAVING been responsible for the annotations accompanying this set I am subject to suspicion of bias. Of course I wouldn't have written them if I were

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not biased. I am an unreconstructed Straussian and freely admit it, and few old wives' tales make me madder than that one about his paucity of invention from the *Sinfonia Domestica* forward—which would make the *Schlagobers* of 1922 a vapid business indeed. It is a fact that the score is not notable for its tunes, most of which are rather banal. But the mastery of the composer is unflagging from end to end, and altogether this work more than deserves its belated phonographic attention. One day, perhaps, we will have a chance to see the ballet itself. The scenario is literally delicious; the action takes place mostly in a confectioner's shop and the characters are Viennese sweets (*Schlagobers* being translatable "Whipped Cream"). In lieu of that eventuality this recording suffices, and we are indebted to Lyrichord or its enterprise. The performance is quite adequate and the sound generally excellent. There are a few cuts here and there. However, it should be emphasized that this is *not* the symphonic suite of (for some mysterious reason) the same opus number. —J.L.

**STRAUSS:** *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks; Death and Transfiguration*; the NBC Symphony conducted by Arturo Toscanini. RCA Victor LM-1891, \$3.98.

▲THE Maestro's *Death and Transfiguration* was an interpretative wonder and this belated preservation of it is more than welcome. Whether or not *Till* is properly remembered as one of his specialties I would not venture to say; the critical folklore has it that he missed the humor of this score but it has always seemed to me a rather sanctimoniously moralistic business, anyway—an attitude that explains my high regard for Toscanini's rather heavily satiric, rather than deft, approach. No matter. The great man's career is now history and so is this coupling, which derives (not without some fancy slight-of-hand in the engineering department) from an aggregate of more than two 1952 originals. Excellent sound, considering. No direct competition, either, except for an old Reiner disc on the same label that I continue to value highly for reasons that could have been more easily defended until Toscanini's came along. —J.L.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74*; Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1901, \$3.98.

▲THIS is Tchaikovsky without tears, but it is not the relief from remembered hair-tearing exhibitions you might expect. Monteux has gone too far. Only in the brilliant, impersonal third movement, consequently, does he achieve the effect we know this music can make on the

listener. The Bostonians play superbly, and Victor has provided another splendid example of its top-flight engineering skill. This version, then, is musical, easy on the ears; but it does not have the emotional communication that is this famous score's reason for existence. —C.J.L.

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**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 (Pathétique)*; Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Westminster WN- or SWN-18048, \$4.93 or \$3.98.

▲CERTAIN liberties notwithstanding, I am more deeply touched by this *Pathétique* than by any other on LP. The only competition, to these ears, would be the sonically inferior Ormandy or Bernstein performances. But neither of these so nearly approximates the noble abjectness of the old Furtwaengler shellac, which remains my criterion to this day. I understand that RCA is considering an LCT re-release of this classic, undoubtedly with some "enhancement" of the sound. I do hope so. But whether or not this comes to pass the new Rodzinski will be my personal preference. I must emphasize that subjective attitudes are particularly controlling with this music. No matter my enormous regard for Toscanini and Monteux in their different ways, I cannot abide either's *Pathétique*; to me it seems that they simply do not respond to the music's inherent emotionalism. Rodzinski does, and without sacrificing much of his dedicated fidelity to the letter of the score. The orchestral playing is as good as I have heard out of England, where most of the best is coming from these days. Westminster has outdone itself as to engineering. More's the pity that the *Fifth* by the same forces is available only at \$11.25 in the "Laboratory" Series. —J.L.

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**VIVALDI:** *Concerto in A major, Op. 30, No. 1; Concerto in D minor, Op. 22, No. 4*; **LEO:** *Concerto in D for Cello and String Orchestra*; **SACCHINI:** *Overture to Edipo a Colono*; Scarlatti Orchestra conducted by Franco Caracciolo. Angel 35254 \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THIS CONCERT of early 18-century music has a certain old world charm. Caracciolo is a somewhat self-effacing musician, who seems to prefer letting the music speak for itself without any special or personal elucidation that one easily apprehends. Sauvity and graciousness prevail but the vital spirit that illumines the performances of the Virtuosi di Roma is less in evidence. Even so, those who like the earlier orchestral music of Italy would hardly deny Caracciolo and the Scarlatti Orchestra (a Neapolitan favorite) a place on their record shelves. The two Vivaldi works are performed with some zest and these are exceptionally fine Vivaldi concertos, contrasting in

style—the first of which, employing no soloists, has a captivating opening movement, and the second, employing two soloists—first violinist and harpsichord, has a memorable *Grave* section. I Musici performed the *A major* previously but not with the similar stylistic adroitness of Caracciolo, who wisely shuns the more luscious, modern approach of the former. The *Cello Concerto*, the work of a gifted melodist, Leonardo Leo (1694-1744), is deserving of a more eminent soloist than the competent, though hardly inspired, player employed here. An engaging overture by Antonio Sacchini (1730-1786), known and admired for his *arie* and once greatly admired for his operas, brings the concert to a pleasant close. Fine sonic values in keeping with a chamber ensemble. —P.H.R.

## KEYBOARD

**BACH:** *Chaconne* (arr. Busoni); *Partita in B flat*; *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* (arr. Hess); *Sheep May Safely Graze* (arr. Petri); *Adagio from Toccata No. 1 in C* (arr. Hess); Anatole Kitain (Siena Pianoforte). Esoteric LP disc ESP-3001, \$5.95.

▲ESOTERIC'S exploitation of the Siena piano, a remarkable instrument that resembles the "Stein-type" piano of Mozart's day, continues with this recital largely devoted to Bach transcriptions. On this occasion the performer is Kitain, a familiar figure to concertgoers but something of a stranger to the phonograph. His current playing seems to have more grace than I remember it possessing. Taking the transcriptions for what they are and accepting the oddity of hearing them played on a less modern piano instrument than one for which they were designed, you are not likely to be disappointed by what this beautifully recorded disc has to offer. And in the transcriptions Kitain makes a greater effect than in the *Partita No. 1*. All things considered, this issue remains a curiosity that is strangely affecting at times. —C.J.L.

•  
**BACH:** *Overture nach Französischer Art* (Partita No. 7 in B minor); Stanislav Heller (harpsichord). Delyse 10" LP disc E.C.3135, \$4.00.

▲A NEW harpsichordist, a new record company—at least for this listener. Stanislav Heller, one discovers, is 30 and a Czech. He has lived in England since 1947 and has given recitals in London's Festival Hall and on the Continent. Heller is a talented player. The *B minor Partita* is a difficult piece to play; it demands style, technique, and concentration. Heller meets these demands with very little effort and, in addition, makes each section move along with an unusually easy flow. Fortunately, Heller

is equipped with one of Thomas Goff's very beautiful harpsichords, and its sounds are a benediction throughout. The recording is warm and smooth, but it is not the extended range type we rather often run into these days. —C.J.L.

**CHOPIN:** *Nocturnes*; Jan Smeterlin (piano). Epic LP set (2 discs) SC-6007, \$7.96.

▲SMETERLIN takes few liberties with Chopin; he adheres to the composer's tempo and dynamic indications in a refreshing manner. He clearly understands the nocturnes and he shows some temperament in communicating a portion of their expressive content. What is missing from his work is sufficient skill to command a wide variety of finger weights and tonal colors. Without these technical tools, Smeterlin is seldom able to arch a phrase and send it soaring. His often flat tone (perhaps made more unattractive than it is by the not-very-clean-or-well-balanced recording) is scarcely the singing sound Chopin demands in rendering his lyric lines. Though Rubinstein's rubato can easily annoy some listeners, his performance of the nocturnes is certainly in every other way masterful and clearly remains the choice at this moment. —C.J.L.

**CHOPIN:** *Sonata No. 3 in B minor; 4 Impromptus; Berceuse*; Nikita Magaloff (piano). London LP disc LL-1189, \$3.98.

▲MAGALOFF has a good finger technique and a respect for composers' directions. He is also a musical spirit. All the same, his playing of Chopin is not ideal. The brilliant portions (superficial at least in relation to the Polish genius' more intimate expression) are carried off well enough by him, but the lyricism of the great *B minor Sonata*, not to mention the singing passages of the other works represented, is deflated by his apparent lack of feeling for this particular inspiration. The curve of various phrases do not have the necessary arch; there is no lift, no soaring quality. Then, too, London's piano sound is rather disaffecting. The recording seems oddly balanced, and there is a veiled quality in what one hears that destroys the illusion of presence. This corner continues to recommend Lipatti or Novas in the sonata and Balogh (for want of a more impressive version) in the impromptus. —C.J.L.

**MOZART:** *Sonata in F (K.Anh.135), Sonata No. 7 in C (K. 309), Sonata No. 12 in F (K.332), Sonata No. 4 in E flat (K.282)*; Paolo Spagnolo (piano). London LP disc LL-1212, \$3.98.

▲SPAGNOLO has the clean, dry technique to play Mozart's notes, but he does not convince one that he understands the master's style. By far the loveliest of

these four sonatas is the one No. 12. Here Spagnolo clicks off the phrases and leaves them just about where he found them on the printed page. Where is the drama of the second subject of the first movement or the tenderness of the second? Spagnolo is a young man; he must play these works often and in public if he is one day to communicate their essence. —C.J.L.

**SWEELINCK:** *Toccata in A minor*; **BYRD:** *Fortune Variations*; **PURCELL:** *Chaconne in F*; **HANFF:** *Chorale Prelude—Ach Gott, von Himmel sieh' darein*; **BOEHM:** *Chorale Variations—Wer nur den lieben Gott laesst walten*; **MICHEESEN:** *Prelude and Fugue in D*; **BACH:** *Prelude and Fugue in A minor; Toccata and Fugue in D minor*; **PEPPING:** *Chorale Preludes—O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden; Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag; Heut singt die liebe Christenheit*; **HINDEMITH:** *Sonata No. 1 (1937)*; Fritz Heitmann (organ). Telefunken set (2 discs) LGX-66037/8, \$9.96.

▲THIS SET has been dubbed "organ music from Sweelinck to Hindemith", but to one observer it seems a well-chosen recital rather than a survey. Be that as it may, it represents a feast for organ enthusiasts. The great Fritz Heitmann is in top form throughout the recital and the recording is very clean and apparently accomplished in unusually intimate surroundings. The organ itself is of the Baroque type found in northern Germany and very satisfying—not the grandest one you ever heard, but seemingly just the right size for the room it is in. As for music in this recital: you are almost sure to be impressed by the seldom-performed Byrd and Purcell pieces and the almost unknown Hanff (1630-1706) chorale prelude with its sense of reverent mysticism. The Sweelinck and Boehm numbers are typical of these composers' best work. The Bach pieces are well known, but I must call your attention to Heitmann's tremendous playing of the superb *Prelude and Fugue in A minor*. Hans Friedrich Micheelsen is a contemporary German composer born in 1902. On the basis of his *Prelude and Fugue in D*, he seems to me a first-rate craftsman if a little colorless in personality. This work is gratefully written for the organ. I cannot say that much for Ernest Pepping's *Chorale Preludes*. Their modernity seems false to me; that is it is not apparently the natural sound of the composer's voice. Pepping (also a contemporary German composer) tortures the famous *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* in his three comments on it. This recital ends with Hindemith's solid *Sonata (1937)*—and grander it seems on every rehearing. —C.J.L.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Album for the Young, Op. 39*; **MENDELSSOHN:** *Six Child-*

*ren's Pieces*, Menahem Pressler (piano). MGM LP disc E3204, \$3.98.

▲INCONSEQUENTIAL these little pieces may be, but how well they are written for the piano! How charming some of them sound when played by an artist as sensitive as Pressler! MGM's clear recording is very close, however, and that may be the reason why certain numbers do not transmit the soft glow one wants. It could be, too, that Pressler's touch is here and there just a bit percussive and that the balance between right and left hands is not infallibly pleasing. These points aside, Pressler quite often achieves a certain gentle radiance that is affecting. —C.J.L.

## REVIEWS IN BRIEF

**GLUCK:** *Flute Concerto on G*; **PERGOLESI:** *Flute Concerto in G*; **BOCCHERINI:** *Flute Concerto in D*; Camillo Wanaussek (flute) with the Pro Musica Orchestra of Vienna conducted by Charles Adler and Michael Gielen. Vox PL-9440, \$5.95.

▲RECORDINGS featuring this or that woodwind enjoy a ready market in the "X" but considerable quantity of co-instrumentalists, professional and amateur. To others they are almost always a bore. The disc at hand is an exception, and open-minded listeners will do themselves a disservice if they not sample it. The three works are charmers, however short of masterpiece status they may fall, and there is no reason why anyone to whom the Baroque period is not anathema shouldn't find them delightfully worth his attentions. Good sound. The Boccherini is an LP first, not distinguishable from any other typical Boccheriniana. The others are less compatibly coupled on earlier discs. —J.L.

**KODALY:** *Quartet No. 1, Op. 2*; the Roth String Quartet. Mercury MG-80004, \$4.98.

▲FIRST microgroove performance of an amiable turn-of-the-century work that held more promise than ever was realized. The music is Brahmsian, with an even stronger admixture of Magyar elements than that implies, and rather more structural transparency on the whole. The form is orthodox, the melodies ingratiating (even to a startling Sibelian redolence in the third movement). The tapestry patterns are woven with infinite coloristic skill by the Roths—themselves Hungarians—and the cello playing of Janos Starker in particular is almost obtrusively compelling in its ardor. Fine studio sound. —J.L.

**SPELMAN:** *The Vigil of Venus*; Ilona Steingruber (soprano), Otto Wiener (baritone), the Vienna Academy Chamber Choir, Ferdinand Grossmann conducting, and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Zoltan Fekete. MGM E-3085, \$3.98.

▲AMERICANA collectors will not want to miss this highly esoteric entry—if that adjective properly can be invoked for so conservative a product. Timothy Mather Spelman, born in Brooklyn in 1891, has not been a figure to reckon with in contemporary music, although his name does bob up from time to time. What fluke prompted the recording of this large-scale work one cannot imagine, because it is not worth quite such expensive attention. It is, however, a thoroughly workmanlike affair, and any composer who can spin out a setting of Latin for nearly an hour without losing his listeners clearly must have written some symphonic or chamber pieces that would be a real asset to the modern repertory. If that remark seems cryptic, consider that most of the big choral machines, especially those on themes of antiquity, almost



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invariably bring out nothing of a composer's art beyond his competence and just a hint of whatever individuality he has to offer. Every composer has to write one before getting down to his real expressive business, apparently, but it usually expires in short order. I would hazard a guess that Spelman's work, which utilizes an anonymous 93 trochaic tetrameters dating from Hadrian or later, possibly as late as the fourth century, has benefited from the recent ascendancy of Orff—who is probably the first composer since Handel to have made a go of it with this kind of thing. Spelman's style is not so calculatedly stark, and there is little asstringency in it. But it is a benediction to hear this relatively current reminder (premiere 1931) that the diatonic fields do not lie fallow. The performance is solidly academic in the best sense, and well recorded. Too bad that a Latin text is not provided, but the English paraphrase is better than nothing. The skimpy program notes—quite a departure for MGM—do not disclose that the poem itself was highly experimental in form. Space permitting, it would have been fascinating to follow Spelman's approach to the sometimes assonant, sometimes rhyming, sometimes recurrent lines—all of which have to do with the coming of spring *et cetera*. In lieu of this, which might show the end results to be rather more startling, we can only conclude that *The Vigil of Venus* is a respectable suit of clothing, with a belt in the back, enclosing a rather staid example of classical statuary. —J.L.

## POPS SPOTLIGHT

▲DECCA has released all at once a batch of about three dozen 12-inchers, the best of which will be touched on in the following paragraphs. First, let me list a few of them that need no comment because they will be picked up automatically by fans of the several bands involved: Andre Previn's *Let's Get Away From It All* (DL-8131), Gordon Jenkins' *Heartbeats* (DL-8116), Vic Schoen's *A Letter to Laura* (DL-8132) Florian Zebach's *Dream of Romance* (DL-8158), Wayne King's *Waltz Dreams* (DL-8145), Fred Waring's *Lullaby Time* (DL-8110), and Carmen Cavallaro's *Music at Midnight* (DL-8115). Since all of the foregoing are "mood music", add *Music for Holding Hands*, which is a program of piano solos by Bill Snyder with rhythm accompaniment (DL-8102). Nothing special about any of these. In fact, the only "mood music" item of any particular interest this time is a production called *Lonesome Echo* (Capitol W-627), with a you-name-it cover by Salvador Dali and contents contrived by Jackie Gleason. There is a deliberately and expertly disembodied air about this disc, with the most dolorous tones of the mandolin, guitar and solo cello permeating.

NON-CLASSIFIABLE, but I suppose you'd call it "occasional music" as distinguished from "mood music", are five Columbia entries. The first (CL-811) is *Calendar Girl*, a Kostelanetz concoction assembling a song for every month of the year, each one being a girl's name by the definition implied in the title. All very tricky but effective, except how did *Sweet Leilani* get in there? Never knew a chick with that moniker. The remaining four discs, all by Peter Barclay and his orchestra, are generally described as "music for gracious living"; CL-694 is for the buffet, CL-695 for the barbecue, CL-697 for after the dance, and CL-698 for doing it yourself (I'm not making this up). Well, it's quite listenable stuff, anyway. I'm beginning to think that this "music for" business has got altogether out of hand. When are we going to get "music for its own sake"?

NOVELTIES, more or less, are the following. Decca has *The Fabulous Mae West* (DL-9016) in unadulterated oldies like *A Guy Takes His Time* and *Pecado*—a parenthetical explanation tells us that this means "Sin". Angel has a reading of T. S. Eliot's *Practical Cats* by Robert Donat (Ang. 30002) interspersed with the setting by the English composer Alan Rawsthorne. This is positively a must for feline aficionados, although in truth the poetry

is pretty thin stuff. Columbia has Noel Coward at *Las Vegas* (ML-5063), recorded in an actual performance at the Desert Inn. By me this is a total loss but for *Let's Do It*, which is virtually worth the price of the disc (which you will note is a premium price to start with, however). Another Decca specialty item is *Music for Barefoot Ballerinas* (DL-8034), being a series of "impressions" by Larry Elgart intended for parlor balletomanes and others. This one I won't attempt to describe, but investigate it by all means if the title intrigues you. Delightful listening.

BROADWAY-HOLLYWOOD discs are coming thick and fast. Best of a sizable lot are Columbia's CL-810 and RCA's LPM-1048, which are respectively a batch of tape snips from a Carnegie Hall concert conducted by Richard Rodgers (the orchestra is the N. Y. Philharmonic, the music his own) and a splendid new version of *Carousel* with Robert Merrill, Patrice Munsel, Gloria Lane et al under Lehman Engel. Other worthies are an orchestral boiling-down of *Oklahoma* by Nelson Riddle and his orchestra (Capitol T-596), highlights from the sound track of the movie (same label, SAO-595), lusty-voiced John Raitt's recital of familiar Broadway show songs (same label, T-583), and finally—although Vienna hardly may be considered an extension of the White Way—highlights from Kalman's *Countess Maritza* and *The Gypsy Princess* on Angel 64026 with Sari Barabas, Herta Staal, Rudolf Schock and others with an orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Schuechter. The last-listed recording represents quite a bargain for admirers of the *Merry Widow* genre. I might mention also Alfred Newman's *Serenade to the Stars of Hollywood* (Decca DL-8123), which brings together a dozen of his own memorable songs in lush treatments—fitting for *The Moon of Manakora* but not so much for *The Song of Bernadette*.

BING CROSBY, the beloved old master crooner of them all, gets a three-disc album to himself this month. It is Decca DX-152, appropriately entitled *Old Masters*. That is literally the truth of it; included are pressings from some three dozen old masters dating back over the years to 1934 (*Somebody, Somebody*) and amounting to a generous cross-section of his most popular shellac singles—remember *Shoe Shine Boy* (1936), *You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby* (1938), *My Buddy* (1940), *I Ain't Got Nobody* (1941), *I Want My Mama* (1942), *These Foolish Things* (1944), *Sweet Lorraine* (1945), *The One I Love* (1946), and *I'll See You in My Dreams* (1947)? Gosh, a guy gets to feeling awfully

ancient listening to these onetime favorites. But it is a pleasure to have them around again, just the same. The engineers have cleaned up everything remarkably. Of course, if you really want to feel ancient, there's the Decca *Songs of our Times* series, the most recent addition to which is a collection of 1916 gems (*Down Among the Shivering Palms*, *Poor Butterfly*, *Nola*, *Roses of Picardy*, etc.) played by Roy Ross and his orchestra on DL-5511. On the same label, Ethel Merman takes you even farther into history a program called simply *Memories* (DL-9028); in her familiar robust style she reaches from the 20s backwards to the 90s with *The Band Played On*, *While Strolling Through the Park One Day*, *Sweet Rosie O'Grady* and the like. As these things go, highly recommended.

JAZZ this time offers some surprises. You would expect the new pair of Louis Armstrongs on Decca (DL-8168/9) to be first class because it was recorded live at the Crescendo in Los Angeles. Alas, both fail to take fire, to the extent that they sound downright commercial. On the other hand, you would expect the new pair of Steve Allens (same label, DL-8151/2) to be very much on the commercial side in view of the lad's consistently non-artistic (to say the least) showing on television. Lo, both discs are gems, with the Butterfield and Lawson-Haggart bands riding a batch of standards for dear life. The intellectually diverting (if that isn't a contradiction in terms) Dave Brubeck Quartet is back again on Columbia CL-699. My feeling about Brubeck is not what it used to be. More accurately, he doesn't seem to have grown a whit inventively since his first recording. Of course, you don't have to grow artistically to be interesting; it's just that Brubeck invites that kind of scrutiny. Take the following, all of whom have recently turned out more of what they have always done, and all of whom are worth your attention notwithstanding: Lionel Hampton's All-American Award Concert (Decca DL-8088) and Quartet/Quintet (Clef MG-C-667); Bob Scobey's Frisco Band, with vocals by Clancy Hayes (Good Time Jazz L-12006); Pee Wee Hunt in *Disieland Classics* (Capitol T-573); *Sing and Swing* with Buddy Rich (Norgran MG-N-1031); *Jumpin' at the Woodside* with Buck Clayton (Columbia CL-701); *Bixieland* with Eddie Condon and his All-Stars (same label, CL-719); the Gene Krupa Quartet (Clef MG-C-668); and perhaps above all Woody Herman's *Woodchopper's Ball*—Decca DL-8133—a re-issue collection of his greatest pre-Herd arrangements like *Yardbird Shuffle*, *Blue Flame*, *Woodshedding with Woody* and the title tune. Take your pick from the foregoing. Not a dog in the lot. —JAS

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